

A

REVIEW

OF THE

STATE

OF THE

BRITISH NATION.

Tuesday, May 6. 1707.

I Am now upon the Scruple against the Union, for the Difference of Opinions in Religion-among us, which Differences, by Mismanagement of Parties on both side, are grown very disturbing to this Age, and indeed I cannot but say, it is by *Mismanagement*, and that on both sides; it is not so much our real Differences, but our Manner of differing that is the Cause of all our Confusions—*Envy, Wrath, and Strife, &c.* are so much made Partners in our Breaches, that I own, they are fatally encreas'd; but the quarrelsome Principles are born of Hell, and all come from one Beginning, let them be on what side they will.

In order to set this right, I have been examining the Reason of Dissenting, the Occasion, Time and Manner of it, with the several Attempts made towards a Reconciliation—What ill Use has been made

by any Willingness the *Dissenters* have shown to conform, is the Effect of Ignorance and Partiality; for that is so far from an Argument, that they are ready to drop their Cause; that it is an Argument of the Sincerity of the People, and of the Weight of the Causes moving.

For if the *Dissenters* have on all Occasions manifested a Willingness to comply with the Church, it is an undeniable Testimony, that the Difference is very material, that these cannot comply, nor those cannot abate: If it were a Trifle that keeps a Million of *Dissenters* in England out of the Church, the Church of England was unaccountably to blame to insist upon it so stiffly, and not stoop to the Weakness of their Brethren in so small an Affair, rather than drive so large a Part of the People from them, and prompt so great Division in the Nation.

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If it were a Trifle the *Dissenters* separate for, they could not have the Face to talk of conscientious Scruples, and the Necessity of Dissentings; 'Tis therefore a material Difference, which has caus'd this unhappy Division, and tho' it be not in Doctrinal Points essential to Christianity, yet as it is in Points which can neither be abated on one hand, nor comply'd with on the other, it has been found absolutely necessary, by the Wisdom of both sides, to make an Allowance, come to a Temper, fix the Liberty of one, and the Authority of the other by legal Bounds; and what is the End of all this? Not Conformity or Comprehension, for all that is given over, as what is not likely to be obtain'd; but it is for maintaining Love, Peace, Charity, and good Neighbourhood among Fellow Christians; that they may agree, converse, correspond, and unite in civil Affairs, tho' they cannot in Religious; that they may no more be fleeing from and pursuing one another; that *Ephraim* may not envy *Judah*, nor *Judah* vex *Ephraim* any more, but civil Government be preserv'd among them.

If any Man shall ask, *what is this to the Purpose?* I shall answer, *very much*; for this proves, that there can be no Reason for one Body of *Dissenters* to suspect another of deserting them, no Reason for the *Scotts Presbyterians* to distrust the Stability or Principles of the *English Presbyterians* in their Adherence to their Profession; for that conforming to one another is now of no manner of Consequence, but securing one another in the State and Quality, as to Principles, in which they really now stand.

This is the real Nature of Union; the Subject of the present Affair is a true Balancing of Interests, that one may not jarr with the other; that every one, however differing in Perswasion, that however wide in Opinion, may yet joyn in Charity, Christian-Love, and common Courtesies, be mutually assitant to protecting and defending one another, and may treat one another as Neighbours, Christians, and Countrymen inhabiting the same Island, incorporated in civil Concerns, and having but one and the same Foundation as to civil Right, which if shaken, must equally affect every Part.

This is what I call reciprocal Duty, this is the Obligation which, I say, lies on one Part of the People to another; this is, what I say is, the civil Peace they ought to pursue; and methinks the Duty is so plain, and the Occasion of it so just, that I need say nothing more to it, than to put you in Mind of it.

How long have all the Men of *Charity* and *Christian Temper* been preaching up this Doctrine, and how have they seen now the very Nature of things bring them to the Practice of it? — We have united with *Scotland*. Well, Gentlemen, you that are angry at it, what would you have done now? — *We know your direct Answer*, you would have that lousie Bargain, as one Gentleman less accustomed to good Manners than to Railing at the Publick, was pleas'd to call it, broke again.

But come to an Answer of Particulars, how would you have it broke? Would you have *England* break it, break Faith, Honour and capitulated Articles? — *England* is very much beholden to you indeed, and it would be a very lousie Figure, to use their own Expression, that *England* would make in the World, if their Honour and Treaties, Faith and Integrity were prostituted, as these Gentlemen would have it be.

But after all, what would you get by the Breach? — All the Answer I can get for this, is, the Gain will be National Confusion, and that is what the Parties seek; 'tis the plain Design of their Method, for nothing that tends to Peace and National Harmony, nothing that has the Face of a Christian, or the least Sense of the General Good, can with the Mischiefs which must necessarily follow upon such a Fracture.

Since then they cannot rationally propose the Fracture of the Treaty, it seems to me the most ridiculous thing in the World, to make themselves and one another uneasy at the Circumstances, which if they are not the most effectually prosperous to both sides, must be the single and genuine Malice of the Party, who in all our happy Progress to Union and Peace, have set themselves up to be the Nations Disturbers.

MISCELLANEA.

AND what must be done with Bankrupts and Debtors now, says a passionate Reader of these Sheets, this Man is for opening a Door to all Manner of Frauds, and putting it into the Power of every Knave, first to cheat, and then defie his Creditors, and he must not be put in Prison at all?

Far from it, Gentlemen, neither does any thing, I have ever said on this Head, look like this; nay, nor am I such an Enemy to the general Part of our Practice in Matters of Debt, I mean, arresting and imprisoning Debtors: I allow, the Circumstances of England make it necessary, and I shall give my Reasons for it, before I quit the Subject; and shall prove, that whereas in Scotland at this time, no Man can be arrested for Debt, or oblig'd to find Bail on mean Process, tho' one way it may be to the Advantage of some People, who might be in Danger that way; yet on the other hand it must be own'd, it is a Cheque to Trade, and helps to keep the People down, as it hinders petty Credit, and prevents People launching freely out in Trade.

In the Circumstances therefore England stands in, as to Inland Trade, of which perhaps it has the greatest Share of any Nation in the World, it is absolutely necessary to make the Recovery of small Debts as well as great, as easie as possible, and to give the Creditor all possible Security, both on the Person as well as the Effects of his Debtor.

But what I am complaining of here, is the Abuse of these Powers, where they are run up to an Extremity, neither design'd by the Law of the Land, nor justify'd by the Laws of GOD; and these are of several Kinds.

1. The horrible Abuses, Briberies, Exactions, and intollerable Barbarities exercis'd by the inferiour Officers, both in insulting the Persons and Families of the Defendant, imposing upon and plundering the Debtor, and in taking Bribes, conniving and delaying their Business, to the abusing the Plaintiff that employs them; by which

either the Law is not executed at all, by which the Creditor is wrong'd and defeated of recovering his just Debt; or if it is executed, 'tis done with illegal Violences, Insults, and all Kind of Abuses, which are neither intended in the Law, nor justifiable in a Christian, or well govern'd Country.

2. The excessive Persecution of Debtors; when it is manifest, they neither have Ability to pay, nor wherewith to subsist themselves or Families; first rejecting all Manner of Compositions, Proposals or Offers made by the Debtor, while he is in a Condition to pay something, and then persecuting him thro' all the expensive Meanders of Law, Prisons, and Concealments, till he has nothing left to offer, and then with the same inexorable Fury getting hold of his Body, please and glut themselves with his Sufferings, and oppose all possible Attempts for his Delivery, till the poor languishing Creature perishes with meer Want, Cold, Stench, and the unsufferable Torments of a Prison.

If these things are agreeable to Law, Conscience or Humanity, then I confess myself at a Loss to determine, what the Rules of these three Capital Articles are, and from whence they are deriv'd. He that prosecutes a Debtor for any Design, but to recover his Debt, is a Murderer, and deserves equal Punishment with the Man of Blood; He that pretends to prosecute for his Debt, but does it by such Methods, and to such Degrees, as he knows can have no Tendency to that End, dissembles with GOD and the World, and only executes his own Revenge, which is directly against both Scripture and Religion, which remits all Vengeance to the great Retribution of the Almighty.

He that would put his Debtor to Death, tho' he should not recover his Debt by it, shows a Temper, I am sure, no Christian will justify, and I wish I could say, no Christian will practise.

A D V E R.